



## **Waller Mill Reservoir Fisheries Management Report 2003**



This 360-acre water supply reservoir is owned by the City of Williamsburg and is located in Waller Mill Park, York County. It was originally constructed in 1942 with the intention of providing water to Camp Peary, but was eventually sold to the City of Williamsburg in 1945.

A navigable tunnel connects the upper and lower portions of the lake. The upper section is smaller and pretty shallow (less than 10' deep) compared to the lower section. The heavily wooded shoreline and the many branches and coves of the reservoir itself provides for a very pleasing environment in which to hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching or just pleasure boating.

This lake is probably best known for its striper fishing (some in the 25 to 35-pound range and plenty of smaller ones), but it is also showing good signs of improvement for anglers interested in largemouth bass, black crappie and white perch. For those of you wanting to try something a little different, how about carp? There is a good chance that the next state record fish could come out of this reservoir. White catfish would also be a good alternative to angle for.

The fish populations in this reservoir were sampled using an electrofishing boat in May and by using gill nets from October through December. Electrofishing allows us to sample shoreline orientated species such as bass, bluegill and redear while gill nets allow us to get a good grasp of the status of more open water species such as striped bass and gizzard shad.

The largemouth bass population was in reasonable condition and showed signs of improvement compared to the results of the 2000 survey. The population size structure was quite good as indicated by structural indices. These were within the range of values expected for a balanced fishery. Catch rates for larger fish were higher than that recorded in the previous survey. The largest bass caught during the survey was 20.5 inches in length and weighed 4.9 lbs. All the bass appeared to be in good general health when examined.

The bluegill fishery was in fair shape with higher catch rates than had been recorded in the previous survey, although few fish were greater than 7 inches in length. Redear sunfish were not as abundant as bluegill and it was disappointing to see that none over 8 inches in length were present in our sample.

Black crappie were abundant and the population was in reasonable shape as indicated by structural indices. The largest fish caught was just over 12 inches in length.

Our sampling indicates that the striped bass population is improving in term of the proportion of larger fish caught over the last three years. All the fish looked healthy. Indeed,

there is no shortage of food – juvenile gizzard shad were very abundant and the species as a whole dominated our sample in terms of abundance and biomass (i.e., total weight). White perch were also very abundant. The population size structure was reasonable and there were good number of fish in the 8 to 11-inch size range.

Since the gizzard shad and white perch populations were so abundant it was decided that the stocking rate for striped bass should be increased from 25 to 35 fingerlings per acre to keep these populations in check and at the same time improve the condition of the stripers.

Common carp dominated the electrofishing sample in terms of the total weight of fish recorded (just over 220 lbs). The largest fish was 32 inches in length and weighed 16 lbs. This reservoir ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the state for trophy carp citations issued by the Department's Angler Recognition Program.

Waller Mill Park is located off Airport Road (Route 645) between Route 60 and Rochambeau Road in Williamsburg (via exit 238 off I-64). For further details call the concessionaire at 757 259 3778 ([www.ci.williamsburg.va.us/rec/parks.html](http://www.ci.williamsburg.va.us/rec/parks.html)) or the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries 757 253 4172 ([www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)).